AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Original) In a computer network that includes a plurality of networked computer systems, wherein a sending computer system sends an instant message through a chain of one or more computer systems to a destination computer system, a method of acknowledging delivery of the instant message, wherein the criteria for determining the success or failure of the delivery are user specified, the method comprising the following:

an act of the sending computer system identifying the user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgement message corresponding to the instant message to the user;

an act of the sending computer system determining whether the user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgement message are met; and

an act of the sending computer system returning a successful acknowledgement message corresponding to the instant message only if the user specified criteria have been met.

2. (Original) A method in accordance with Claim 1, wherein the sending computer system comprises a server computer system associated with a sending client computer system.

3. (Original) A method in accordance with Claim 1, wherein the sending computer system comprises a server computer system associated with a sending client computer system.

4. (Original) A method in accordance with Claim 3, wherein the act of the computer system identifying the user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgement message comprises the following:

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an act of the sending server computer system receiving a data field representing the user specified criteria with the instant message; and

an act of the sending server computer system reading the data field to identify the user specified criteria.

5.   (Original) A method in accordance with Claim 1, wherein the act of the computer system identifying the user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgement message comprises the following:

an act of reading a data field representing the user specified criteria from a database accessible to the sending computer system.

6.   (Original) A method of Claim 1, wherein

the user specified criteria is a "single hop" criteria, and

the act of the sending computer system determining whether the user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgement message are met comprises an act of determining that the user specified criteria have been met if the first server computer system in the chain of computer systems receives the instant message.

7.   (Original) A method in accordance with Claim 1, wherein

the user specified criteria is a "deep or" criteria, and

the act of the sending computer system determining whether the user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgement message are met comprises an act of determining that at least one of the intended recipients successfully received the instant message under the "deep or" criteria.

8.   (Original) A method in accordance with Claim 7 wherein the act of determining that at least one of the intended recipients received the instant message comprises the following:

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an act of the computer system transmitting the instant message to the next computer system in the chain of computer systems along with an indication that the user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgement message is that at least one of the intended recipients successfully received the instant message under the "deep or" criteria;

an act of the computer system receiving an acknowledgement message from the next computer system in the chain of computer systems indicating whether or not at least one of the intended recipients successfully received the instant message under the "deep or" criteria; and

an act of the computer system determining that at least one of the intended recipients has received the instant message if the acknowledgement message from the next computer system indicates that at least one of the intended recipients successfully received the instant message under the "deep-or" criteria.

9.   (Original) A method in accordance with Claim 1, wherein

the user specified criteria is a "deep and" criteria, and

the act of the sending computer system determining whether the user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgement message are met comprises an act of the sending computer system determining that all of the intended recipients successfully received the instant message under the "deep and" criteria.

10.   (Original) A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instruction for performing the acts recited in Claim 1.

11.   (Currently Amended) In a computer network that includes a plurality of networked computer systems, wherein a sending computer system sends an instant message through a chain of one or more computer systems to a destination computer system, a method of acknowledging delivery of the instant message, wherein the criteria for determining the success or failure of the delivery are user specified, the method comprising the following:

an act of the sending computer system receiving an acknowledgement message for the instant message;

a step for the sending computer system determining whether user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgement message corresponding to the received acknowledgement message for the instant message are met; and

an act of the sending computer system returning a successful acknowledgement message corresponding to the received acknowledgement message for the instant message only if the user specified criteria have been met.

12.   (Currently Amended) A method in accordance with Claim 11, wherein

the user specified criteria is a single hop criteria,

the step for the sending computer system determining whether user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgement message corresponding to the received acknowledgement message for the instant message are met comprises an act of determining that the user specified criteria are satisfied if the first server computer system in the chain of computer systems receives the instant message.

13.   (Currently Amended) A method in accordance with Claim 11, wherein

the user specified criteria is a deep or criteria,

the step for the sending computer system determining whether user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgement message corresponding to the received acknowledgement message for the instant message are met comprises an act of

determining that the user specified criteria are satisfied if at least one of the intended recipients receives the instant message.

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14.   (Currently Amended) A method in accordance with Claim 11, wherein

the user specified criteria is a deep and criteria,

the step for the sending computer system determining whether user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgement message corresponding to the received acknowledgement message for the instant message are met comprises an act of determining that the user specified criteria are satisfied if all of the intended recipients receives the instant message.

15.   (Original) A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the specific acts and the step recited in Claim 11.